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**Who Owns The Truth? Silence And Post Truth Story Telling In
Michaelides's *The Silent Patient***



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Abstract

The issue of the ownership of the truth in *The Silent Patient* (2019) by Alex Michaelides is embedded in a post-truth environment in which emotional persuasion regularly prevails over objective facts, and in which silence is not inertial but tense, and serves as the most formidable power in narrative. This study explores three related aspects of truth construction in the novel: the meaning of silence as strategic telling of stories in a post-truth context; how framing and narrative strategies contribute to creation of multiple irreconcilable versions of truth; and how fake news, misinformation, disinformation, perspectivism, and social constructivism helps to bring to existence multiple, irreconcilable versions of truth. By tight textual reading around the main passages such as Theo confiding that he was forcibly made to do it, so that Alicia would never speak again, discovery of her diary, hidden between the back of the painting, and alternate understandings of her work as both a happy one and a disturbing one, there is an argument that *The Silent Patient* is a diagnosis of something but not a cure. The novel shows that in the conditions of post-truth stories, oral truth is instantly exposed to usurpation, pathologization, and weaponization, and silence achieves impregnability over the story of a person. Finally, the ownership of the truth is a permanently unsolvable problem, raising the possibility that the quest to seek single and objective truth is conceptually incongruent within systems: therapeutic, legal, and interpersonal that systematically put in place an alternative emphasis on narrative over factual control.

Keywords: Alex Michaelides, Disinformation, Misinformation, Narrative Framing, Perspectivism, Post-Truth, Silence, Social Constructivism, *The Silent Patient*

Introduction:

In an age of the blurring of common factual realities, the issue of truth ownership has made the transition between the abstractions of philosophy to the life-and-death cultural crisis. The spread of post-truth culture, in which emotional belief often has a greater place than objective fact, where algorithms create access to new personal reality, and where even the idea of what can be regarded as objective truth is politicized, has changed in its turn how contemporary fiction manages epistemology, narrative authority, and the morality of things being told. Published by Penguin Books in 2019, *The Silent Patient*, a bestseller by Alex Michaelides, comes at a time when it needs it most as a fictional study of how post-truth narrative warfare works. Alicia Berenson, a renowned artist who is capable of killing her husband Gabriel and refusing to speak after six years, is the focus of the novel, and Theo Faber, the psychotherapist obsessed with ending her silence, is his. However, in its depths, *The Silent Patient* carries out an advanced exploration of the production, challenge, and ultimately loss, of truth inside the structures of truth-seeking systems, known to be such, therapeutic, judicial, journalistic, and interpersonal. The three questions which have been explored in this research article are the role of post-truth in the development of silence as a type of storytelling and resistance, the role of framing and storytelling in the creation of truth and silence, and how the use of fake news, misinformation, disinformation, perspectivism, and social constructivism generate

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multiple, unrelated truths in the novel.

Although officially billed as the Word of the Year in Oxford Dictionaries in 2016, the notion of post-truth is a state which has long been anticipated in literature. Post-truth is a situation where objective facts are not so important to public opinion as influence on people is an appeal to emotions and opinion. In this context, truth is not a place that can be found by evidence and reason but a source that can be tapped to gain strategic benefit. *The Silent Patient* transforms this condition on all the layers of its narrative structure. According to the tabloid media, Alicia has been built into a monster, a femme fatale, and a black widow without her side of the story. Along with her silence, this leads to the legal system embracing the diagnosis of madness as the only possible answer that could have made sense but due to its usefulness rather than being clinically some consideration. The narrator of this novel and its eventual villain Theo Faber represents himself as the saviour of Alicia through therapeutic means as he gradually orchestrates Alicia to end up in a situation where she does not expect to be involved in the scheme he is plotting. In both instances, what is presented as truth is really narrative convenience in lingo of authority. This is ironic in the novel because the silence of Alicia, which is perceived as pathology or performance by everyone, is probably the only natural reaction to world which already tells her narrative even before she can tell it.

Within this post-truth paradigm, silence requires hypothetical rethinking. The analysis of conventional literature has tended to regard silence as nothingness, deprivation, or voice loss, which has to be defeated by exposition. This assumption is inverted in the *Silent Patient*. Alicia's act of not talking does not amount to failure to communicate but rather a tactical holding back of narrative by a system that has demonstrated their inability to handle it in a truthful manner. Once she speaks, her words are immediately taken, pathologized or rejected. Her one lie about the death of Gabriel, which Theo interprets as a test and verification of her awareness of him rather than a genuine act of refusal to acknowledge him, proves that she has not lost the ability to use language but she has honed it into a tool. The silence is made, in this reading, the most untarnished storytelling: a tale that is completely at the discretion of its narrator, and impervious to the interpretive violence to which spoken testimony is necessarily subject. The study is therefore in line with the developing literature relating to the topic of silence as rhetorical strategy, trauma discourse and political opposition and will be an expansion of this into the particular field where post-truth epistemology exists and where the issue is not that the truth can be said but that it is susceptible to corruption when said.

The narrative structure used in the novel makes it further difficult to seek truth in a straight way. Michaelides uses the two-part format: Theo recalls his first-person narrative of his therapeutic experience of the Grove, which is intertwined with Alicia, her diary entries that are disclosed in the latter chapters. It is not just a suspense construction but an epistemological argument. The reader spends most of the novel in Theo's position putting his diagnostic gaze into Alicia and embracing his way of putting events into perspective as true. Even the introduction of the diary is seen at the very end of the novel, which makes it be subject to a severe reconsideration of all the events, which lead to it. As the stalker, known to have caused the murder, Theo has not been a reliable narrator but a perpetrator who has created a summative story of self-exculpatory tales. The structural revelation makes the main argument of this novel concerning the truth: the truth is not found by gathering more facts but

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recognizing who is authorized to speak, what point of view has been systematically neglected. The physical positioning of the diary i.e. being wedged in the back of the painting physically depicts the state of the suppressed truth: it was there all along and no one who would not claim that he or she was not in a better position not to see it.

The third research question deals with certain processes of post-truth narrative production that have been the focus of a lot of investigation in contemporary media studies but have been less frequently subject to long-term examination in literary criticism. Fake news, which can be defined not only by blatant falsehood but also by disrupting the truth by presenting contradicting stories and absence of trust, serves within the inner world of Theo when he can no longer trust his own recollection of Kathy emails. The systemic pressure to solve ambiguity results in misinformation, which turns clinical uncertainty into the false certainty that Alicia had to be mad. Disinformation works based on the principle of strategic omission and selective disclosures as the curated story by Max Berenson and the professional lie of Christian shows. Perspectivism, the philosophical view that all knowledge requires mediation by individual consciousness, is given literary expression in divergent interpretations of the paintings of Alicia in which a single image holds pure evil, to one viewer, and is unreadable to another. The view of social constructivism expressed through the self-report of Alicia which says that once you name what you then cannot see the entirety of it, comes out to show that truth is not found in a vacuum but stagnated in the crucible of relations, in a linguistic, and institutional crucible which chooses what is knowable and who is knowable.

This study thus places *The Silent Patient* in a larger literary tradition of ill reliability of narration and epistemological discord as it contends that *The Silent Patient* is a uniquely post-truth publication. *The Silent Patient* is an attempt to relate to truth not as something resistant to approach, or as a set of opposing stances, by experimenting with subjective consciousness, as in modernist experiments, or flaunting radical indeterminacy and fragmentation in postmodernism, but rather as something that is challenged and utilized to strike a blow. Who owns the truth is a question, but not an invitation to philosophical skepticism, but, as a methodological instrument, a diagnostic means of identifying power relations, institutional authorities and narrative frames of determining whose voice may be considered evidence and who's a symptom. The silence of Alicia, the confession of Theo in the disguise of therapy, the physical hiding and the subsequent uncovering of the diary is not used as a narrative device but is instead an argument about the circulation of truth, or lack of circulation of truth within systems that profess to put it into circulation.

Problem Statement:

Truth has gone volatile, subjective and can be manipulated by means of narrative and interpretation in modern discourse that has been influenced by the post-truth conditions. This calls into doubt the truth construction and control as in *The Silent Patient*, where the concept of silence is indeed more than the absence of speech; it is indeed a potent narrative tool that follows various understandings and cannot be interpreted with certainty. Nevertheless, there are limited studies on silence as a type of storytelling in post-truth structures specifically in terms of framing, misinformation, disinformation, perspectivism, and social constructivism. This paper, therefore, discusses the construction, contestation, and moulding of truth in the novel along the lines of competing views.

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Research Questions:

How does post-truth influence the interpretation of silence as a form of storytelling and resistance in *The Silent Patient*?

How do framing and narrative strategies shape the construction of truth and silence in *The Silent Patient*?

In what ways do Fake News, Misinformation, Disinformation, Perspectivism and Social constructivism contribute to the emergence of multiple “truths” within *The Silent Patient*?

Literature Review:

Akram and Khan (2024) used the attachment theory developed by Bowlby to analyze *The Silent Patient* and its impact on the personalities of adults based on their childhood trauma. Lothstein (2020) associates the violence of Alicia with suppressed anger due to rejection by her father, whereas Akram et al. (2022) prove the relationships between disorganized attachment and psychological distress. Pratiwi and Pramesti (2022) also single out post-traumatic stress due to childhood abuse. It has been analyzed that unstable bonds develop fear of abandonment and emotional instability in adulthood (Ackerman, 2018), proving the fact that childhood experiences are the main determinant of the psychological consequences of characters. Michaelides (2023) uses the ambivalent sexism theory proposed by Glick and Fiske to *The Silent Patient* and explores the ways benevolent and hostile sexism influence the lives of female characters. The novel was examined using psychoanalytic (Hossain, 2021) and postmodernist perspective (Ashraf et al., 2020) investigated ambivalent sexism in the media. It can be seen through the analysis that, though it might seem apparent that Theo is exercising good paternalism toward both Alicia and Kathy, the uncritical adherence to these gender stereotypes perpetuates further victimization of the two women and is directly connected to the exploitation of the women, as it might seem that the position of the supposedly good paternalism is the one promoting further victimization of the two women.

As another example of psychoanalytic technique and criminal investigation crossing each other, Shoukat and others (2021) discuss the role of Theo Faber as a psychotherapist-detective in *The Silent Patient*. The systematic inquiry that Theo uses to uncover the truth about the cause of Alicia’s violence through the analysis of childhood trauma, understanding the paintings created by Alicia to reflect the symbolic meaning of her violence, and interviews helps to reveal that Alicia is only violent as a result of her repressed feelings of patricide due to the betrayal of Gabriel (Michaelides, 2019). The myth of Alcestis gives an explanation to the silence of Alicia in terms of psychological death after betrayal by the father. This plays on some insights of therapy and detective help to reach the subconscious motives of crime.

Abbas et al. (2025) utilize Freudian and Lacanian theories to *The Silent Patient* to consider silence in terms of repressions and resistance. Other works speak about Theo Faber within the context of transference and countertransference (Arshad and Shoukat, 2021), and Casul (2024) relates the trauma to Alicia to the identity fragmentation. The article interprets the painting Alcestis by Alicia as being a sublimation of the repressed disloyalty (Freud, 1957) and her inability to speak as a denying the Symbolic order of Lacan, which was a traumatic experience of the Realtrauma that could not be described in words. The unspoken roles in the stylizing of fragmentation of the narrative form are processes of the unconscious and the way uncooked trauma

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defines an identity and behaviour.

Al Areqih (2026) by applying the notion of othering introduced by Simone de Beauvoir to *The Silent Patient*, where women are oppressed by the patriarchal structure, applies it to the novel. Part of the research on the novel has been performed within the framework of an attachment theory (Akram et al., 2024), narrative medicine (Manahil, 2023), and psychoanalysis (Arain, 2024). As found the research conducted by Pratiwi and Pramesti (2022) noted that PTSD symptoms were the outcomes of the trauma response of the Alicia and the Alcestis myth written by Shoaib et al. (2023) resulted in interpreting her non-verbal responses. The truth is that the unreliable narration as Theo is a tool of patriarchal aggression and the silence of Alicia is employed as a counter to the male dominated world and discourse which tries to influence the experience of the woman.

Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis allowed Shoukat and other scholars (2021) to make sense of unconscious causes of violence. With the concepts of personality introduced by Schultz and Sydney (2016), and the explanation of the id, ego, and superego provided by McLeod (2013), the analysis will be performed on the way of the repressive desire and trauma of childhood appearing in the violence. The research shows that silence of Alicia and her violence are consequences of unconscious mental issues and Theo manipulation reveals how individuals are able to exploit the fact that a person has mental illness to make an attack on the mentally ill individual. The study discovers that seemingly rational individuals are even able to get destructive unconsciously.

Anggriani, Sada, and Rosnija (2022) examined educational values in *The Silent Patient* as an EFL reading material. The result of the analysis using the model of classification of values developed by Hawkes (2013) indicates that there are four types of educational values, including truth (mental health / physical health), beauty (creativity / artistic expression), religious (spiritual belief), and moral (responsibility / family care). The research conducted by Pratiwi (2019) and Trindade (2012) earlier was effective to prove that novels are useful in learning a language and personality development. According to the results the psychological problems and the depth of the ethics depicted in the novel, the novel can be considered at a good example of developing a high level of mastering English knowledge, critical thinking and the culture of the students.

Akhter (2025) was writing about silence as a type of communication of the trauma. The career literature of the subject looks into silence in psychotherapy (Gale and Sanchez, 2005), the non-verbal expression with the Alcestis myth (Shoaib et al., 2023), and the psychological archetypes of Alicia (Safitri et al., 2023). Roy (2020) also features a feminist perspective, in which the hysteria of Alicia is seen as the uprising of the patriarchy. It demonstrates that the silence, employed by Alicia is outside the victimhood, which is a dynamic resistance and self-discovery. The twin narrative format is the element of psychoanalysis research of the conscious unconscious interaction, and the story line of a diary allows exploring unconscious trauma showing the manner literary devices aid to demonstrate unconsciousness of human soul.

Theoretical Framework:

What is Post-Truth?

McIntyre (2018) argued that Post-truth is a situation in society and even in the realm of politics whereby the objective facts do not have much power to influence the

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opinion of the masses compared to the emotional appeals and beliefs held by a person. The word became widely known in 2016, after Oxford Dictionaries, after it was labeled as the Word of the Year by the English dictionary, four years after the usage of the term had risen by 2000%. Post-truth by the definition by Oxford is characterized in such ways, as the reality of a situation is not significant in one or another situation to create an opinion among the population compared to emotional request and individual beliefs. Notably, the word post does not mean that truth has become a thing of the past but of the fact that the truth is archaic or inferior to the feeling. This idea was prefigured by Stephen Colbert who in 2005 came up with the word truthiness in an attempt to describe the human tendency to hold something as true because it seems true despite having no evidence to support this claim. The post-truth is not just a matter of lies or political propaganda, but a more fundamental epistemological problem in which the existence of verifiable reality itself is challenged and that people are retreating in their own personal worlds of belief system that are not subject to contradicting fact.

Framing and Narrative:

Framing and narratives are minor psychological aspects that are applied in a bid to shape the opinion of the mass. The narrative of framing revolves around highlighting one of the problems or the downplaying of the rest, and determines the way people think about issues, causes and solutions. Frames are an interpretive tool that assigns a meaning and value to events and usually affect political attitudes and choices (Kahneman, 2011; Oswald, 2019). Such influence is also strengthened further through narratives, in the sense of providing coherent and emotionally appealing narratives that appear practicable though not absolutely true. All narratives that comply with cultural beliefs and expectations make them effective and capable of forming other possible worlds that modify perceptions and judgments (Oswald, 2019; Götz-Votteler and Hespers, 2019).

Filter Bubbles and Echo Chambers:

Filter bubbles and echo chambers influence the manner in which people are provided and consumed with information. A filter bubble is an occurrence where an individual is shown primarily information that supports their preexisting beliefs and those opposed are filtered out by an algorithmic or social interaction (Pariser, 2011; Schweiger, 2017; Nguyen, 2020). This generates a narrow lens perspective that reinforces personal views and exposes less opposition outlook. Conversely, echo chambers imply the socially organized control over information, with members of such a group confiding in inside and baby-dolling outside members (Nguyen, 2020; Messingschlager and Holtz, 2020). They create more cohesiveness in a group and separate people into insiders and outsiders, making echo chambers more resistant to external critiques and this aspect is more stable than filter bubbles (Nguyen, 2020).

Social Constructivism:

According to social constructivism, knowledge and reality are not such that they are being discovered objectively but constructed socially and culturally via human interpretation and interaction. It questions the concept of raw facts and argues that historical, cultural, and social frames influence what people think is the truth (Burr, 2015). Knowledge is thus social and not individual as the shared social processes and

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exchange of ideas within communities brings about knowledge (Fleck, 1979). The determinants of language and meaning are also social because the meaning is found out when applied in context when communicating (Wittgenstein, 2009). This leads to the interpretation of the categories of gender, race, and truth as interpretations by social practices, power interactions, and common consensus (Haslanger, 2000; Berger and Luckmann, 1991).

Fake News:

Fake news is defined as willfully created or misleading information designed to alter the opinion of the people and disperse malicious information in the form of credible news (Götz-Votteler and Hespers, 2019; Hendricks and Vestergaard, 2019; Schmid et al., 2018). It tends to mingle both truths and lies, confusing the audience and prompting them to further share the information (Rini, 2017). Fake news is not vague as rumors or gossips are, but it is specifically formatted to seem convincing and credible (Gelfert, 2018). Even though the fake news did not start with the internet, social media has made the process much faster (Bernal, 2018). It often capitalizes on pre-existing beliefs and partisan stance and causes people to accept information without critical thinking and, therefore, positively affects the problem of epistemic uncertainty and truth erosion (Rini, 2017; Mathiesen, 2019).

Misinformation and Disinformation:

Misinformation and disinformation are the cause of so-called information pollution where people are bombarded with irrelevant, misleading or false information, especially in the internet and social media (Lem, 2002). It is thus important to judge the reliability and applicability of information to determine which of the facts or misleading claims are applicable. Whereas incorrect or misleading information is known as misinformation, disinformation is intentionally designed and propagated with an aim of deceiving and making up of false information (Floridi, 2011; Dretske, 2008). This manipulation is commonly presented in the form of such things as clickbait or over-the-top content intended to gain popularity and sell. The meaning can also be distorted through misinterpretations and other biased framing which result in alternative explanations and conspiracy theories that dispute the truths on the ground (Zoglauer, 2018).

Perspectivism:

Perspectivism, affiliated with the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, claims that the truth and reality are not independent and objective but based on the particular visages. Nietzsche states that personal beliefs, interpretations and social contexts influence knowledge and hence various views of the same reality might come to generations (Nietzsche, 1999; 2009). This relativism approach can mean that truth is non-absolute and is an interpretation influenced by the language, metaphors, and human values. Perspectivism therefore serves to instill the post-factual thinking because it permits various forms of view of the world so that beliefs, power relations, and utility can shape the thought that is accepted as truth by people (Hales and Welshon, 2000; Nietzsche, 2003).

Analysis And Discussion:

Post-truth in *The Silent Patient* makes silence no longer the lack of communication,

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but the most powerful mode of narration and resistance, since the verbal version immediately becomes subject to appropriation, pathologization, or even intentional disregard by those with the power of narration. The fact that Alicia has refused to talk in six years does not allow Theo, the legal system, and the media to bend her words to fit their own self-serving fantasies and keeps her reality in an unattackable form.

Theo states that when she lied to me about how Gabriel died it was clear that Alicia had recognized me and was testing me, he unwittingly indicates the overall strength of silence as the narratives and resistance, which directly opposes his post-truth agenda. “But when she lied to me about how Gabriel died, it was obvious Alicia had recognized me and she was testing me. I was forced to take action, to silence Alicia forever (Michaelides, 2019, p. 280)”. According to Theo, the lie that Alicia has told, a strategic misstatement about the killing is not a confounding one, but rather a test, a strategic communicative gesture. This is her speech; this is the first definite message that she makes, being in her vulnerable position, that she realizes that he is her abuser, and that she has a different version of the truth. The decision to lie and remain silent in the strongest and the clearest sense of the word: she does not tell the whole story, just a bit of a lie to reveal the bigger one of the lies of Theo. This performance of resistance is what makes Theo take his hand, it makes him have to shift his psychological manipulation to literal and permanent silencing. His next bid to attach morphine injection on Alicia as a way to keep her quiet is the final confession of failure in the battle of post-truth that he started. He fails to adhere to her narrative with gaslighting or reinterpretation since her strategic silence, or her refusal to give a coherent, linear truth that he can then co-opt, is stronger than any falsely created narrative that he can create. Here silence does not mean nothing, but the ultimate storytelling; a story that Alicia can have absolutely all the power over, which Theo cannot have because he has to possess and determine the truth. His desperate efforts to find her diary in the previous paragraphs point to this- the written account, which was once a physical object, which he might have destroyed or altered, has been replaced by a mutable, indestructible kind of Testa mentation, which he cannot shut up without putting her to death altogether.

In *The Silent Patient*, framing and narrative techniques are used to construct the claims of truth and silence by bringing about Theo Faber as the voice of authority in the practice of diagnosis through which she can know the silence of the Alicia as pathology that needs intervention but withhold the diary of Alicia until later on in the book. That structural lag compels the reader to remain in Theo and only open his viewpoint and internalize his version of the story until Alicia reveals her narration.

Alicia’s diary acts as the ultimate age-old battle with the topic of framing and narrative because it dramatizes the scene when silence is broken and truth is actually taken, but in a manner that makes the idea of a single, objective reality hard to grasp. “I thought I was crazy at first... But I’m not crazy. I’m not.” “As soon as I heard that, something in my brain clicked... It was him (Michaelides, 2019, p. 272)”. Even Alicia opening statement, I thought I was crazy at first. But I am not crazy. I am not, immediately forms a narrative frame of recovered sanity and agency, making her diary a critique of the years of silence where others, Theo, Diomedes, Christian, the law system, devised plots about her that she was neither a part of, nor was present in. The words himself in my brain finally clicked is a symbolic expression of the intellectual awakening that turns her into more than the passive, silenced object of the situation that cannot speak but still has insight into a complete and accurate frame,

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one that identifies Theo as the first offender. More importantly, the motivation she gives to write, i.e. he will not be able to get away with it, he will get punished and this time I will be telling the truth, clearly positions her diary as a counter-narrative that is aimed at taking away the control of truth and trying to twist in their hands the very man who has manipulated her therapy and tried to kill her.

This is post-truth storytelling in its most disputed form: The fact that this diary is only uncovered once the reader has read the whole of the narrative through the eyes of Theo makes Alicia confront the issue of how framing can be used to ascertain credibility. In the novel, Theo had the institutional power of a psychotherapist to present the silence of Alicia as an illness, her speech as a way of influence, and his own body was positioning as treatment. This reversal of power is inverted by Alicia diary as she places Theo not in a perspective of a healer but as a stalker and a murderer and an attempted killer. Her announcement that she will tell the truth does not reflect the assertion of an accuracy of fact, but an act of politics of narrative repossession, or re-establishing of the authority to narrate a story of herself, after decades of being narrated by other people.

Theo provides a deep insight into how fake news, as understood not simply as intentional lying but as a destabilizing of truth by conflicting stories, epistemological ambiguity, undermining trust etc. acts in *The Silent Patient*. “I found myself concocting outlandish theories to prove Kathy’s innocence. Maybe it was just an acting exercise... (Michaelides, 2019, p. 199)”. The part uses drama to bring out the inner world of a character who is stuck in between several possible versions of the reality, and cannot decide which, or whether any of them, holds the truth. The narration of Theo represents the state of post-truth subjectivity when having found out that Kathy had been writing him emails, he now wonders whether his own recollection could be trusted or not: Could my recollection be trusted? I had been stoned out of mind, after all--had I read between the lines, had I misinterpreted what I read? --demonstrating how misinformation works both in the outside to it and in the inside, as the self becomes an invalid narrator to the self. This self-doubt is further exacerbated by his ability to make up other exonerating frames such as the fantasy that the emails could have been an acting exercise, a rationalization that indicates how falsely an alternative narrative can be created to maintain a preferred reality.

When the narrative voice says that Diomedes was saying Alicia was mad, because it was the only explanation that made any sense, because she had to be one, the novel voice portrays the most significant moment in which misinformation is presented as truth, as everyone had assumed that this truth is damaged and broken, once it is built upon a group of assumptions and not facts. “Diomedes was saying Alicia was mad. It was the only explanation that made any sense... She had to be (Michaelides, 2019, p. 15)”. The fact that this, according to the narrator, was the only explanation that was making any sense reveals the main mechanism of misinformation that runs in the novel that of conflation of a lack of understanding with knowledge. Confronted with the unexplainable silence of Alicia, the legal and psychiatric apparatus, echoed by the mass media, converge around one and the same narrative madness, without necessarily being clinically valid because it is the most convenient. The situation has to be she had to be is the key of the falsehood; this is a statement that came after the need but not after the truth. Such is a performative certainty, which turns a complex psychological state into simplistic, sensational truth which is helpful to rest of the courtroom, media, and general populace who require a simplified, clean-cut truth. In

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presenting a conjectural psychiatric opinion as a self-evident fact the quote demonstrates how falsehoods propagated not just through intentional falsehood but also through the accepted norms of the system of trying to solve ambiguity by committing the person to a single, simplifying narrative restores silence to the subject of this identical falsehood.

The theme of disinformation can be seen in this passage through the head-on collision of two opposing versions of the events: the dependence of the narrative on the version told by Christian and the accusation of a lie by Theo, proving that creating and supporting various and incompatible versions of the truth is promoted through deliberate deceit in *The Silent Patient*. “Christian happened to be passing the nurses’ station... he saw Alicia lurking around the corner, Christian is lying (Michaelides, 2019, p. 263)”. The fact that, when Stephanie says that Christian was passing by the nurses’ station: that he found that Alicia was lurking round the corner is the institutional adoption of a rather authoritative version, one which is conveniently giving a neat, closed-end version of why the crisis had taken place. This story is a powerful sort of disinformation in the sense that it uses the authority of Christian, in his professional role as a forensic psychiatrist, as a tool to tell a self-serving lie. The fact that Stephanie is ready to believe this version without questioning it shows how lies like these can be propagated in a system that excuses expediency and scapegoating rather than asking questions; she is ready to believe the version that was presented by Christian in a way that he excuses the administration of blame and gives an easy to control truth to place the blame on Yuri. Theo throws a spanner in the works of this creation of reality with his counter-assertion that Christy is lying and instead of a suicide, he is trying to murder a man. Theo exposes disinformation not merely as an error committed by an innocent man and committed by a very talented individual, but a manipulative act of his control over the story and renders Christian and his motive of shutting Alicia up. In the passage, the author demonstrates that the disinformation is performed at the levels of the first, the main lie of Christian to hide his guilt; the second, the official spreading of the lie into reality; the third, the silence of Alicia, who is the only truth, which could prove them both wrong. Subsequently, the conflict between Alicia was suicidal and Alicia was nearly murdered are the perfect illustrations of how disinformation at its inception divides reality into conflicting truths which the institutions support through various mechanisms: the need of Stephanie to be a part of the institution, the need of Christian to protect himself, and the need of Theo to avenge, leaving the possession of the truth entirely up to whose narrative is granted institutional legitimacy.

The fact that Alicia comments to her own reflection that, after giving something a name, it ceases to gaze at anything but makes you lose sight of the entirety of that thing, or the very point of worry about it, goes to all show: Alicia, in her reflection, in its original meaning, is striking directly at the main argument of social constructivism: “Once you name something, it stops you seeing the whole of it, or why it matters. You focus on the word, which is just the tiniest part, really, the tip of an iceberg (Michaelides, 2019, p. 07)”, the fact that language does not neutrally describe the world, but The sense of what is right or wrong that Alicia shows in rejecting her writing by calling it from a pretentious point of view either a diary or as academic as possible, journal suggests her subconscious knowledge that the labels placed on her writing will have predetermined notions, expectation and evaluation that she and others will assign to her experiences. Social constructivism is the belief that truth

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should not be found but rather created via social discourse and institution, cultural discourse; in refusing to name her writing, Alicia is trying to maintain its fluidity to prevent encasing it in reductionism of labeling. However, ironically, her journal literature is the place, where various constructed truths come into conflict. She makes a proclamation that she will only write down positive, happy, normal things and specifically prohibits any use of the so-called crazy thoughts which is seen as her internalization of the socially constructed dichotomy of sanity versus madness, a dichotomy that is subsequently turned on her by the law of law, the media, and the psychiatric institution. The paradox is that even attempting to take charge of her story with the use of words is testimony to the irreducibility of the social constructivism: she cannot write without the paradigms of meaning that society has already set on her behalf.

The clear contrast between the attitude of Jean-Felix in the painting, who regards it as glorious and joyous, and Theo, who answers that joyous was not the term I would have used, instead using unsettling, perhaps, as his substitute, makes here the key aspect of perspectivism, of creating many, irreconcilable truths in *The Silent Patient*. “Jean-Felix gazed at it. ‘Isn’t it glorious? ... It’s joyous.’ ... Joyous wasn’t the word I would have chosen. Unsettling, perhaps (Michaelides, 2019, p. 138)”. The two men look in front of the very same image, which is the picture of the car crash that caused the death of the mother of Alicia, and they are using it to build entirely opposite worlds, where in one of them a bloody corpse with a soul emerges like a large bird with yellow wings. The gallerist Jean-Felix whose career and existence hinges on the value of aesthetic qualities, color scheme and emotional uplifting views the word joyous as the person sees aesthetic quality, color arrangement, and transcendence over the traumatic content of the subject. To him the truth of the painting is in its formal characteristics and in its ability to entrust a sense of the sublime experience and make the death presented therein a secondary element to the artistic success. Theo, in his turn takes the painting as a psychotherapist, sensitive to psychological traumas and their symptoms; his point of view is defined by his professional paradigm of diagnosis, trauma, and pathology resulting to his perception of not transcendence but disturbance. In Jean-Felix, we see happiness, in Theo, we see discomfort, but there can be no objective superiority on either side. The passage worsens perspectivism by showing how the same observer may have a variety of changing views on the same object in different circumstances; Theo later speaks of the Alcestis as beautiful and mysterious and at the same time points to the self-inflicted wounds and scars of self-harm on Alicia showing that his own perception between the aesthetic admiration and the clinical analysis is divided.

The viewpoint of Jean-Felix is also shown as being partial and self-centered; the fact that he later explains to Theo that his interpretation of the picture was so joyful because he was actually coveting the art, rather than the artist, points out that his interpretation of the work might be influenced by his monetary investment in the work of Alicia as well as the fact that he wanted the painting to continue to sell. The passage, therefore, shows that perspectivism is not just a thing of taste, but an identity, career, and underhand. The very object of the painting itself does not present any unique truth to be found in it; instead, it turns into a Rorschach test, on which everyone bringing himself to interpret it projects his own interpretive grid, which generates various versions of the truth that can never be resolved. The truth is an aesthetic transcendence on the part of Jean-Felix; a psychological discomfort in the

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part of Theo; the reader is without a reliable judge to tell who is right, just that truth in the novel can always be mediated to the understanding of who is looking through the window.

Conclusion:

The present study has attempted to provide an answer to an ostensibly straightforward question the question: Who is the proprietor of the truth in *The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelides? The argument factoring in the three research questions culminates into a disturbing finding that, in the post-truth world of the novel, truth is owned by no one and everyone at the same time, and exchanged like money, which loses its worth the instant it is bought. The six-year silence of Alicia Berenson is not such an absence to be interpreted, but occurs as the most extreme epistemological declaration in the novel: the rejection of the game of owning the truth, of which she was a victim. This conclusion will be the synthesis of the results of each research question to find that *The Silent Patient* is eventually diagnosing a condition and not a treatment and this situation shows that post-truth narrative spaces do not make the idea of single and objective truth just non-accessible, but conceptually non-coherent.

To answer the first research question, which is how post-truth affects seeing silence as storytelling and resistance, the analysis shows that the silence of Alicia serves as the only communication that cannot become captured by the post-truth machinery directed at her. The admission by Theo, that he was merely acting under compulsion, to make Alicia never see again, is the most accusing one in the novel: her calculated reserve of narrative, in such instances as the lie that was one of the tests of his acknowledgment, is more decisive than the most actual truth she might have uttered. In a post-truth world, where emotional belief is habitually accepted over the truth, where people have been conditioned that such truth is susceptible to reframing, insanity or is something that can be invoked by conflicting narratives is instantly subject to attack. The literally concealed diary, stuck between the back of the painting, becomes the material expression of this knowledge- truth must hide behind artificiality to exist. Silence then is not the opposite of the story but simply the most elegant of them, a story so thoroughly guided by its author that it cannot fall into the interpretive violence of Theo, Diomedes, and the tabloid media so ready to subject Alicia to every form of interpretive violence whenever she ventures to utter her words. Addressing to the second research question: how framing and narrative strategies condition the process of creating the truth and silence, the results prove that, in fact, framing is not only a method of presenting the truth but the process by which the truth is produced. The way Diomedes dismisses the explanation of Alicia as performance and a fantasy restages Alicia as victim by the fact that he does not change one fact of her testimony. The pinprick along the vein revisits the same physical evidence of a suicide attempt as an attempted murder showing that facts actually have no meaning at all until placed in an interpretive context. The discovery of the diary written by Alicia, which the reader only learns about after having lived in the vehicle of Theo, compels a structural calculation of the way in which narrative architecture stipulates the credibility. Her reframing, which is metaphorical, the non-killing of Gabriel, it was Gabriel who killed me, I just pulled the trigger, does not seek another set of facts, but a new vocabulary of morality. The cumulative argument presented in the novel is that there is no truth distortion through framing; framing is the only truth that human thinking can take. The question is "who owns the truth? then falls under the question:

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who controls the frame? and the answer, which is in the case of Alicia, is not any one of her well-wishers.

The third research question analyzing the role of fake news, misinformation, disinformation, perspectivism and social constructivism in creating multiple truths brings the most thorough diagnosis of the post-truth condition of the novel. Fake news does not work as a lie, but rather as an epistemic instability in which Theo cannot be convinced of his own recollection, and Dr. West is using psychiatric history as his weapon to destabilize the current reality. Misinformation flourishes in the silence of Alicia, turning the opinion expressed to Alicia, that Diomedes said Alicia was mad into an unquestionable fact through the magic of repetition and institutional authority. The mechanism of disinformation is strategic omission, because the selective disclosure of the news by Max Berenson, as well as the professional authority of Christian, show that the best lies are those which are dressed in partial truth. Perspectivism, as the divergent interpretations of the Alcestis portrait, of pure evil to one, inexplicable to another, of joy to Jean-Felix, of unease to Theo, displays that objectivity is not a hard goal but a conceptual impossibility. Social constructivism, as explicated by Alicia herself when she says that once you name something you no longer see the whole of it, proves that language does not represent things, but instead creates and limits them such that the pre-linguistic truth is a philosophical impossibility.

A combination of these three lines of inquiry produces a central paradox: the more physically assertive, the more determined characters in *The Silent Patient* want to own the truth, the more it slips out of their hands. Theo creates a complex treatment story to place him as the redeemer of Alicia, only to find out that he is her rapist. The law system puts a death sentence of murder, but the diary confounds the mere imposition of guilt or innocence. The tabloids create a story about the black widow that fulfills the desire of the population to consummate the sensational and does not have the slightest connection to the experience of Alicia herself. It is only by the very quietness, only by her art, that Alicia retains any real relationship to her own truth even--and that is where it absolutely deserves the name of ownership when it is in words that others may warp. It is not that the painting Alcestis says, I am innocent, I am guilty-- it is, and is open to interpretation, without explanation. The hidden and accidentally found diary is only able to talk when it is impossible to listen to it.

At the end it gives no answer to the question who owns the truth since the question is part of a pre-post-truth epistemology which the novel has succeeded in deconstructing systematically. Where all facts are prone to a reframing, all silences to pathologization, all words to weaponization, telling the truth turns into not a place but a war zone- and silence an alien inviolable territory. The last thing that Alicia does not have a voice, but having spoken, she leaves behind a diary that verifies her reality when her physical body recedes into the world of irreparable silence that Theo has instigated. The most terrifying revelation in this novel is that, in the battle of owning the narrative, the only way to save what one knows as the truth intact is to make one outlive oneself, and even then, as the further narration of Theo in the novel shows, the post-truth forces will merely proceed to write their end on top of yours. Who owns the truth? No one. Everyone. The matter is still debatable and this is exactly what is needed.

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